

Formation Of A Complex Identity In Rohinton Mistry's Novel Such A Long Journey

Meenakshi Sharma*

**Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Khanpur
Kalan, Haryana*

*Corresponding Author: Meenakshi Sharma**

ABSTRACTS: *This paper aims at to describe the formation of a complex identity in Rohinton Mistry's novel Such a Long Journey. By birth Rohinton Mistry is an Indo-Canadian Parsi writer who had settled in Canada now. His Identity was himself hyphenated as Indian-Canadian Parsi which is reflected in all his works. In his novel Such a Long Journey, the main protagonist Gustad Noble is the mouthpiece of Mistry's own hyphenated persona. Each character in this novel whether it's Gustad, or his friend Dinshawji, Laurie Coutino and Dr. Pamaster all are torn between complex and dual Identity.*

KEYWORDS: *Parsi Identity, Hyphenated, Migration, Post-colonialism, Alienation, Dilemma.*

Date of Submission: 17-02-2019

Date of acceptance:03-03-2019

I. COMPLEX IDENTITY IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S NOVEL

The Post-Colonial period plays a significant role both for the Nation and his native people because they have just relieved from the terrible clutches of colonial rule. Both start to mould their life into a new dimension by making their new identity.

The Identity in post-colonial novel is the core point in which imaging the crisis and the conflicts of the colonized's struggle and experience to find a path for the identification between the early native history and heritage and power of the dominant culture that is imposed by the colonizers. This idea is illustrated by Edward Said that the national re-establishment of society, affirmation of identity, and the appearance of new cultural practices instigated as mobilized force and then advanced the struggle against Western domination everywhere in Non-European world (Said 218).

'Identity' word has been derived from the French word *identite*, which has its etymological roots in the Latin noun *identitas*; -tatis itself a derivation of the Latin adjective *idem* meaning "the same".

'Identity' means the characteristics of an individual by which a thing or a person is recognized or known. Who or what a person or thing is that depends on the identity of that particular person or thing. When a person becomes an immigrant, he develops a dual identity while staying at another country. He has to cope up with the new country if he has to live peacefully in that country. He has to adopt their cultures while maintaining his own native inheritance. But sometimes he faces and experiences rejection by their peers that they are different, their skin colour is different so they don't belong to the adopted land. All this leads to a great conflict in his mind that they can never be a part of white society just because of their skin colour especially true of Asian or African immigrants.

This kind of dilemma made him confused about his own self. Sometimes he himself asked such questions - Who am I? What is my real identity? Which country is my actual home? Although he adopts the culture of the new country yet he cannot cut off himself totally from his roots. These roots always remain alive somewhere in the corner of his heart. Sometimes the new country does not accept him completely or sometimes he does not accept the whole culture of the new country as such situation the person feels himself in the state of in-between-ness which is beautifully illustrated by the philosopher Homi K. Bhabha.

Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* states "It is not the colonialist self or the colonized other, but in-between-ness that constitute the disturbing distance the figure of colonial otherness-the white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body. It is in relation to this impossible object that the luminal problem of colonial identity and its vicissitudes emerges" (Bhabha 45).

The migrant faces a lot of difficulties in their newly accepted identity as immigrants in the alien country. For them, it is not only a challenge of geographical displacement but also a challenge for transformation of their culture ideologies, Isolation, Marginalization, and Hyphenation are also some features of the lives of Diaspora. When a group or an individual is in the margin from the mainstream, they are usually in hyphenation and isolation in their condition. Margin is a space where hyphenated identities fall into and seek for

their cultural spaces. These spaces are generally occupied by those Diasporas who hyphenated from their culture attempt to assimilate in other dominant culture with their hybrid experience of Diaspora.

In the Diaspora, immigrants create identities for themselves in many different ways. Immigrants and their second-generation (whether born in Canada, America, or elsewhere) and their native people of alien country have different interpretations of and perspectives on India. Although the identities of immigrants and their second-generation children differ, they often share ambivalence towards the geographical, physical, emotional, and intellectual home (Agnew 14).

Thus identity is a social construction that is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'. It belongs to the future as well as to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power (Hall 225).

The pain of alienations and the severe identity crisis one faces due to immigration to distant lands is expressed best by the writers of the Diaspora. Amongst all the writers who can be categorized as Diaspora writers, Rohinton Mistry is one writer who has created a distinct name for himself because of his brilliance as a writer and also because of his unique craftsman-ship of honest portrayal of the Parsis through his short stories and novels.

As a writer of Diaspora, he always portrays the identity quest. He has written on the identical struggle of the Parsis. The way he depicts the Parsis culture, their habits, and customs is unique. As a Parsi and then as an immigrant in Canada, Mistry sees himself as a symbol of double displacement and that's why his novels articulates the quest for an identity and the relationship with the homeland. Mistry's characters are in search for individual identity against poverty and pessimism.

Mistry's historical situation involves construction of new identity in the nation to which one immigrates and a complex relation with the cultural history of the nation, he has left behind. Thus we can say that Rohinton Mistry through his diasporic discourse has well depicted his ancestral background, his community's encaged situation in a metropolis like Bombay and his deep attachment with nostalgia for a world gone by Mistry's meticulous description makes the readers feel as if they are walking into the streets of Bombay, visiting the houses of Parsi community and through skilful blending of the characters' personal affairs with communal and political matters related to Bombay and India he lands them significance as social beings. He grew up in a Parsi household in Bombay (Mumbai) and this is what he knows best:

When you have grown up in one place and spent the first 23 years of your life there- that's how old I was when I left – it is almost as though you are never going to be removed from that place. Twenty-three years in the place where you were born, where you spent all your days with great satisfaction and fulfillment – that place never leaves you. All you have to do is keep updating it is a little bit at a time. And it works.

In *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry's concept of self-identity or identity is seen at many instances. First of all the change of name of certain streets seems to be a loss of identity. Dinshawji, Gustad's close friend, protests against the renaming of Indian, especially Bombay streets. For instances, Lamington Road is renamed, as Dadasaheb Bhadkamkar Marg and Carnac Road is changed as Lokmanya Tilak Marg. Dinshawji feels that loss of old names is loss of traditional and loss of social identity and even self-identity. These changes may take away what should remain in this world. For Dinshawji life cannot be live in any other name.

When Gustad asked "Why worry about it? If it keeps the Marathas happy, give them a few roads to rename. Keep them occupied. What's in a name?" (74). He was very serious. He called Gustad wrong. Names are very important for him. At one place he said, "I grew up on the Lamington Road. But it has disappeared in its place is DadashaebBhadkhamkar Marg. My school was on Carnac Road now suddenly it's on Lokmanya Tilak Marg. I will also disappear. My whole life I have come to work at flora fountain. And one fine day the name changes. so what happens to the life I have lived? Was I living the wrong life, with all the wrong names? Will I get a second chance to live it all again, with these new names? Tell me what happens to my life, Rubbed out just like that? Tell me!" (74).

The loss of childhood for Gustad seems to have greater significance. Mistry described the childhood of Gustad as a paradise. Even as a grown up man Gustad longs for his mother's love and finds uncomfortable with any other in the world. He is kind of a man who longs for the past comfort and in this process he loses his present identity. Even when he feels a pain in his fingers he starts to remember of his school days. First of all, Gustad loses his traditional values when his son Sohrab rejects whatever he says. Sohrab refuses to join as IIT student and later he misbehaves in his sister birthday's party.

"It's not suddenly. I'm sick and tired of IIT, IIT, IIT all the time. I'm not interested in it, Why can't you just accept it? IIT does not interest me. It was never my idea, you made all the plans" (48).

These things make Gustad to feel that he has lost his paternal identity. He says that Sohrab is not his son until he learns respect. There are so many images that remind us about the loss of childhood of Gustad and his longings. Then, Gustad says that one day his son will also remember about his childhood like him.

“You must be blind if you cannot see my own example and learn from it” (49).

His search for identity is a continual process as Mistry says that Gustad's long journey of recuperating things is non-stoppage.

Secondly, Mistry finds it difficult to escape from his Parsi identity. In all his novels, many characters belong to minority and they face a lot of hurdle due to his Parsi identity.

“What kind of life was Sohrab going to look forward to? No future for minorities, with all those fascist Shiv Sena Politics and Marathi Languages nonsense” (55).

In case of Black stone wall, it saves Gustad and Jimmy from Non-Parsi eyes. It was the sole provider of privacy for them. Darius needed old newspaper at school, on account of the refugees. Teachers arranged fund-raising contests, “Darius said he would prefer five Times of India's because his friends would make fun of the Parsibawajinewspaper. Gustad would have none of that. You should be proud of your heritage. Take the Jam-E-Jamshed or nothing at all” (83).

“The English language papers were kept separate because they used a newsprint quality superior to the regional ones, and fetched more by the kilo” (83).

It is said that what is in name. But this name is very important because it reflects your identity through which you are acknowledged by the society. Without name there is no identity of yours. It is the name which remains eternal after your death. The same thing is happened to Dr. Paymaster, the local physician. He purchased the closed down dispensary of Dr. R .C. Lord, M.B.B.S., M.D. Estd 1892. Some fifty years ago. One day Dr. Paymaster removed the old Dr. Signboard and putting up his own new. The very next day, the dispensary was in turmoil. Patients were marching in and marching out, demanding to know who this Dr. Paymaster was” (113).

Another example was Laurie Coutino. She tells Gustad in shame and terrible anguish, “Mr. Dinshawji has ruined my own name for me” (176). For the incorrigible flirt and joker, playing on the Parsi word for the male member, has told her that he wants her “to meet his lorri.... ‘You can play with my little lorri,’ he said, ‘such fun two of you will have together’. In his thoughtless way, Dinshawji has named her his thing” (112).

For Dinshawji has literally made the woman's proper name improper, has turned 'Laurie' into the metaphorical measure of his own narcissism by appropriating her identity to that of his 'lorri'.

Conclusion – To conclude, we can say that Mistry through his character portrays the complex identity of himself. As a Parsi minority, he has to make migration from India to Canada where he torn between Indian culture and Canadian culture which forms a dilemma regarding his identity.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Agnew, Vijay(2005), *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- [2]. Bhabha, Homi (1994), *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- [3]. Ethnicity: Identity and Difference. *Radical America*, 23, No. 4, 1989.
- [4]. Hall, Stuart (2000) "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Diaspora and Visual Culture*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, London: Routledge.
- [5]. Mistry, Rohinton (1991), *Such a Long Journey*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
- [6]. Said, Edward W. (1994), *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf.

Meenakshi Sharma " Formation Of A Complex Identity In Rohinton Mistry's Novel Such A Long Journey" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 08, no. 2, 2019, pp. 86-88